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(54) **A construction for automatically milking animals**

(57) A construction for automatically milking animals is provided with a milking robot and a computer which is capable of being connected with a number of measuring instruments which are related to a number of functions of the construction. A monitoring program for said functions is installed in the computer, with the aid of which the computer is suitable for determining, on the basis of a comparison of data from one or more of

the measuring instruments with reference data related to said functions, a diagnosis in relation to an anticipated fault in one or more of said functions. The early determination of a diagnosis enables to warn a user and/or a service mechanic, who is then able to take in time the possibly required measures to avoid the anticipated malfunction.

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Description

[0001] The invention relates to a construction for automatically milking animals according to the preamble of claim 1.

[0002] Such a construction is known. Patent EP-A-0 576 086 describes a construction in which malfunctions occurred are reported with the aid of a control system. The disadvantage of such a construction is i.a. that it is only reported that a particular component does not function anymore. Patent WO-99/31957 discloses a construction in which a cumulative value in relation to the useful life of a component is updated. When a threshold value has been reached, there is generated a signal indicating that the component has to be replaced. The disadvantage of such a construction is i.a. that the actual wear is not taken into account, so that components having a great divergence in their anticipated life are often replaced unnecessarily quickly.

[0003] The invention aims at improving and further automating such a construction. According to the invention this is achieved by the measures in the characterizing part of claim 1. The early determination of a diagnosis enables to warn a user and/or a service mechanic, who are/is then able to take in time the possibly required measures to avoid the anticipated malfunction. This enhances the reliability of the construction. Moreover it may appear that such measures will only be required at a later point of time, which is cost-saving.

[0004] With reference to the following description the invention will now be further elucidated.

[0005] Constructions for automatically milking animals, such as cows, by means of a milking robot are known per se. The milking robot is provided with means for automatically connecting test cups to the teats of an animal to be milked. Said means comprise e.g. a robot arm and a sensor for detecting the position of the teats of the animal to be milked relative to the test cups. There are further provided control means and e.g. cleaning means, a feeding device, an animal identification system and a milk reservoir. The control means may comprise a computer which is connected or capable of being connected with a number of measuring instruments (such as sensors) which are related to a number of functions of the construction, such as e.g. the milking process or parts thereof, the pre-treatment of an animal to be milked, the cleaning of the teats of an animal to be milked, the cleaning of the test cups, the feeding of an animal to be milked, the measurement of the quantity of milk yielded.

[0006] A monitoring program for said functions is programmed or installed in the computer. The computer disposes of reference data which are related to said functions. The measuring instruments which are also related to said functions supply data to the computer. With the aid of the monitoring program the computer is suitable for determining, on the basis of a comparison of the data from one or more of the measuring instruments with

the reference data, a diagnosis in relation to an anticipated fault in one or more of said functions. The monitoring program attributes a diagnosis for an anticipated malfunction to certain combinations of measurement data and reference data, as will be elucidated hereinafter. On the basis of the diagnosis it is possible to intervene before the malfunction actually occurs.

[0007] The computer may be programmed such that the diagnosis comprises the anticipated nature of the malfunction, the anticipated point of time or an anticipated time interval for the malfunction. The computer is preferably programmed such that the diagnosis comprises a warning to a user and/or a service mechanic. In this manner it is achieved that it is checked in time (before the malfunction actually occurs) whether action has to be taken in relation to a particular function or a particular component. In obvious cases the diagnosis may also comprise a concrete instruction to the user and/or the service mechanic in order to prevent the anticipated malfunction. Such an instruction may comprise an action to be taken by the user and/or the service mechanic and a time indication for the action to be taken.

[0008] In a preferred embodiment of the invention the diagnosis comprises an indication to the user and/or the service mechanic to check the condition of a component which is related to the anticipated malfunction and to repair and/or to replace said component if necessary. Thus it is possible to establish in an early stage whether the actual wear or abnormality of the component requires to repair or to replace the relevant component at once. When it appears that for example the actually occurred wear is smaller than would have been anticipated on the basis of the age or the use of the component, it is possible to decide still to continue to use the relevant component during a certain time. This is cost-saving, of course. The monitoring program supplies an appropriate warning in an early stage so that malfunctions in the construction can be avoided.

[0009] The computer may be suitable for selecting the diagnosis out of an available collection of diagnoses related to said functions. A great number of diagnoses of possible malfunctions may be stored in the computer. The collection of diagnoses may then at least partially depend on the size of the herd of animals to be milked. With a small herd there may occur partially other problems leading to malfunctions than with a large herd. In this manner the number of animals that will make use of the construction can be taken into account already at the installation of the construction.

[0010] The construction is preferably provided with means enabling to adapt and/or to extend the available collection of diagnoses. The construction may thus be adapted to the specific needs and circumstances of the farm where the construction is used. With some farms there may occur certain malfunctions that hardly play a part with other farms. The means may be suitable for adapting diagnoses or adding new diagnoses on the basis of the patterns of data from the measuring instru-

ments established during the use of the construction. When it appears for example that during the failure-free use of a certain component there is continuously generated a malfunction diagnosis, then the computer concludes that this diagnosis is not correct. In this manner the disadvantageous results of incorrect reference data can be corrected automatically. It is also possible to add a corresponding, improved diagnosis when a particular fault in a particular function occurs a number of times earlier than would have been expected on the basis of the existing diagnoses. The collection of diagnoses is thus automatically adapted to the local circumstances of the construction.

[0011] The means may be suitable for adapting and/or extending the available collection of diagnoses in dependence of the size of the herd of animals to be milked and/or the (possibly measured) intensity with which the construction is used. The fact is that these parameters may strongly influence the nature and the frequency of anticipated malfunctions. Of course, there are also other influences, such as e.g. the degree of contamination of the environment in which the construction is used. In a clean shed there will occur fewer problems than in a strongly contaminated one.

[0012] The construction is suitable for indicating, for example visually and/or acoustically, the diagnosis determined by the computer, or at least the instruction pertaining thereto.

[0013] The measuring instruments may comprise sensors, clocks and/or counters. There may for example be provided a sound sensor by means of which it is possible to establish sounds that deviate from reference patterns. On the basis of the measurements it is possible for example to generate a diagnosis having for instruction "check vacuum pump" or "replace pulsator within 24 hours". It is also possible to use sensors for measuring the electricity consumption of certain components, the air consumption, the water consumption, the milk discharge, the feed supply, the conductivity of cleaning liquid, the temperature in the milk cooling tank, the pulsation pattern in the test cups, etc. With the aid of time sensors or clocks it is possible to determine for example (cumulative) consumption times of components, connection times of the test cups, time required for building up vacuum, etc. By means of counting sensors or counters it is possible for example to determine the number of pulsations of a pulsator or the number of times a component is used.

[0014] The reference data may comprise an interval for a measured value to be determined by means of one or more measuring instruments. The monitoring program selects for example the diagnosis "sound level too high; check vacuum pump" when the measured sound level of a vacuum pump is above 70 decibel during at least 30 seconds. The reference data may also comprise an anticipated life or an anticipated failure-free useful life for a function-related component of the construction. When the point of time is reached at which e.

g. 90% of the useful life of a component has elapsed, the instruction may be "check within 6 hours condition of component and determine whether it must be replaced; if not, give new time interval for further use".

[0015] The computer is preferably suitable for determining in a parallel manner more than one diagnosis and for attributing an urgency to each diagnosis. The construction is then capable of indicating the diagnoses determined or at least the instructions pertaining thereto in order of urgency. This enhances the user-friendliness of the construction.

[0016] The construction may comprise a number of components known per se, such as e.g. coils and motors for driving and controlling other components, a compressor, a vacuum pump and an air system connected therewith with air lines and valves, a pulsator of which e.g. pulsation speed and pulsation ratio are adjustable, a cleaning system with a water pump, a water tank with a three-way-valve and liquid lines, test cups with a liner, a sucking aperture, a tilting mechanism and a cord, milk lines, milk meters, milk filters, a milk glass with a float, a milk tank with a contents meter, a feeding system with a feeding trough, a feed auger and a weighing cell, a box floor with a weighing device and weighing cells, conductivity sensors, cleaning means with lye and/or acid, milk separation means, a laser measuring system for determining the test positions with a laser window, lifting cylinders for the test cups, stepper motors and other drive mechanisms for having certain movements performed by certain components, milk flow sensors, milk pulsation tubes with tube shut-off valves, a milk cooling tank with a cooling system and a cleaning system, an entrance and an exit with a gate, an animal identification system, etc.

[0017] The computer may for example be programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increasing electricity consumption, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check rinsing and/or motors". Therefore, the diagnosis needs not to contain literally the words "check rinsing and/or motors", but may also indicate that a problem with rinsing and/or motors may be anticipated.

[0018] A number of further advantageous embodiments are described in the further subclaims.

[0019] The invention further relates to a construction for automatically milking animals, said construction being provided with a milking robot and a computer, which computer is capable of being connected with a number of measuring instruments which are related to a number of condition parameters of an animal to be milked. According to the invention a monitoring program for said parameters is installed in the computer, with the aid of which the computer is suitable for determining, on the basis of a comparison of data from one or more of the measuring instruments with reference data related to said parameters, a diagnosis in relation to an anticipated undesired deviation in one or more of said parameters. Again the early determination of a diagnosis enables to

warn a user and/or a veterinarian, who are/ is then able to take in time the possibly required measures to avoid the anticipated undesired deviation.

[0020] The computer may further be suitable for continuously adapting the reference data on the basis of measured quantities. The computer may also be suitable for automatically generating the reference data. The reference data may depend on the herd of animals to be milked and/or on the intensity with which the construction is used.

[0021] The construction is preferably provided with means for transmitting the diagnosis determined by the computer by telephone and/or as SMS-message to a user and/or a service mechanic. In this manner the user and/or the service mechanic are/ is able to react promptly.

[0022] The computer may be programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a slowly starting milk flow profile, there is determined a diagnosis implying "prolong the pre-treatment". A number of further advantageous embodiments are described in the further subclaims.

Claims

1. A construction for automatically milking animals, said construction being provided with a milking robot and a computer which is capable of being connected with a number of measuring instruments which are related to a number of functions of the construction, **characterized in that** a monitoring program for said functions is installed in the computer, with the aid of which the computer is suitable for determining, on the basis of a comparison of data from one or more of the measuring instruments with reference data related to said functions, a diagnosis in relation to an anticipated fault in one or more of said functions.
2. A construction as claimed in claim 1, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that the diagnosis comprises the anticipated nature of the malfunction.
3. A construction as claimed in claim 1 or 2, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that the diagnosis comprises the anticipated point of time or an anticipated time interval for the malfunction.
4. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that the diagnosis comprises a warning to a user and/or a service mechanic.
5. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, **characterized in that** the computer is pro-

grammed such that the diagnosis comprises an instruction to avoid the anticipated malfunction.

6. A construction as claimed in claim 5, **characterized in that** the instruction comprises an action to be taken by a user and/or a service mechanic.
7. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 4 to 6, **characterized in that** the diagnosis comprises an indication to the user and/or the service mechanic to check the condition of a component related to the anticipated malfunction and to repair and/or to replace said component if necessary.
8. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7, **characterized in that** the instruction comprises a time indication for the action to be taken.
9. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8, **characterized in that** the computer is suitable for selecting the diagnosis out of an available collection of diagnoses related to said functions.
10. A construction as claimed in claim 9, **characterized in that** the collection of diagnoses depends at least partially on the size of the herd of animals to be milked.
11. A construction as claimed in claim 10, **characterized in that** the construction is provided with means enabling to adapt and/or to extend the available collection of diagnoses.
12. A construction as claimed in claim 11, **characterized in that** the means are suitable for adjusting diagnoses or adding new diagnoses on the basis of patterns of data from the measuring instruments established during the use of the construction.
13. A construction as claimed in claim 11 or 12, **characterized in that** the means are suitable for adapting and/or extending the available collection of diagnoses in dependence of the size of the herd of animals to be milked and/or the intensity with which the construction is used.
14. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 13, **characterized in that** the construction is suitable for indicating the established diagnosis.
15. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 14, **characterized in that** the construction is suitable for indicating at least the instruction pertaining to the established diagnosis.
16. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 15, **characterized in that** the construction is suitable for indicating visually and/or acoustically the es-

- established diagnosis or at least the instruction pertaining thereto.
17. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 16, **characterized in that the measuring instruments comprise at least one sensor.**
18. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 17, **characterized in that the measuring instruments comprise at least one clock.**
19. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 18, **characterized in that the measuring instruments comprise at least one counter.**
20. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 19, **characterized in that the reference data comprise an interval for a measured value to be determined by means of one or more measuring instruments.**
21. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 20, **characterized in that the reference data comprise an anticipated life or an anticipated failure-free useful life for a function-related component of the construction.**
22. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 21, **characterized in that the computer is suitable for determining in a parallel manner more than one diagnosis.**
23. A construction as claimed in claim 22, **characterized in that the construction is suitable for attributing an urgency to every diagnosis.**
24. A construction as claimed in claim 23, **characterized in that the construction is suitable for indicating the determined diagnoses or at least the instructions pertaining thereto in order of urgency.**
25. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 24, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increasing electricity consumption, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check rinsing and/or motors".**
26. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 25, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating air consumption curve, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check air system and/or compressor".**
27. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 26, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating water consumption curve, there is determined a diagnosis implying "leakage and/or obstruction".**
28. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 27, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating milk discharge to the milk tank, there is determined a diagnosis implying "leakage and/or obstruction of a milk filter".**
29. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 28, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating feed supply, there is determined a diagnosis implying "leakage and/or obstruction of a feed auger".**
30. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 29, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating sound measurement, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check vacuum pump and/or pulsator".**
31. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 30, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating filling time for a water tank, there is determined a diagnosis implying "insufficient water pressure and/or leakage".**
32. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 31, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish failed connections of the teat cups and/or a deviating weight of animals to be milked, there is determined a diagnosis implying "weighing floor jammed and/or malfunction weighing cell".**
33. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 32, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating signal pattern of a feed weighing cell with various animals, there is determined a diagnosis implying "feeding trough jammed and/or malfunction weighing cell".**
34. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 33, **characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a positive drifting of the zero level of the weight of the box floor, there is determined a diagnosis implying "accumulation of dirt on box floor".**
35. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to

- 34, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increased air consumption per milking and/or per cleaning, there is determined a diagnosis implying "leaking valves".
35. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 34, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increased conductivity of the pre-rinsing water at the end of the pre-rinsing, there is determined a diagnosis implying "insufficient pre-rinsing due to too low water pressure and/or insufficient emptying by blowing of line and/or leaking three-way-valve tank and/or contaminated, defective and/or drifted conductivity sensors".
36. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 35, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increased conductivity of the main cleaning water at the end of the main cleaning, there is determined a diagnosis implying "insufficient main cleaning due to too low lye/acid concentration and/or too low frequency lye/acid cleaning and/or contaminated, defective and/or drifted conductivity sensors".
37. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 36, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increased conductivity of the post-rinsing water at the end of the post-rinsing, there is determined a diagnosis implying "insufficient post-rinsing and/or contaminated, defective and/or drifted conductivity sensors".
38. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 37, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish the automatic consecutive separation of milk from various animals, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check on the basis of the separated milk whether there are malfunctions in the sensors".
39. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 38, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish more movement in the weighing floor than on average, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the vacuum level of the vacuum pump and/or the condition of the teat cup liners".
40. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 39, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a lower connection time with a teat cup in comparison with the other teat cups, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the position of the teat cup and/or the teat cup liner (shaft and top)".
41. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 40, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish the non-taking of feed by various animals, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the weighing cell of the feeding trough".
42. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 41, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a decreased pumping away speed of milk from the milk glass to the milk tank, there is determined a diagnosis implying "obstruction milk filter and/or pump".
43. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 42, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviation of the centre of gravity of the box floor with the animal to be milked, there is determined a diagnosis implying "feed used up and/or feed auger and/or weighing cell feeding trough defective".
44. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 43, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a longer connection time of the teat cups than on average and more movement in the weighing floor than on average, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the feed augers and/or the presence of vermin".
45. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 44, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a changed milk flow, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the pulsation adjustments; feed used up and/or feed auger and/or weighing cell feeding trough defective".
46. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 45, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish the absence of vacuum on a teat cup after several attempts, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the tilting mechanism and/or the cord of the teat cup and/or the laser window".
47. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 46, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a lower connection time with a teat cup in comparison with the other teat cups, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the position of the teat cup and/or the teat cup liner (shaft and top)".
48. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to

- 47, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a lower average milking speed and/or a lower average milk flow, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the vacuum level and/or the pulsation adjustments and/or the liners of the test cups".
49. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 48, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a higher connection time of all test cups, there is determined a diagnosis implying "laser window contaminated and/or leakage in a lifting cylinder".
50. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 49, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating signal pattern of a milk flow sensor for various animals, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the liner and/or the sucking aperture of the test cup".
51. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 50, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating pulsation pattern for all test cups, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the vacuum level and/or the vacuum line of the pulsator".
52. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 51, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating time required for building up a vacuum, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check vacuum pump and/or leakage air".
53. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 52, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating time required for a known movement, there is determined a diagnosis implying "drive mechanism defective and/or leakage".
54. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 53, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish deviating data of the milk cooling tank (temperature, cleaning times, cleaning temperature, milk quantities, alarms) there is determined a diagnosis implying "check cooling system and/or cleaning system milk cooling tank".
55. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to
- 54, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a discrepancy between milk yield data from the milk meter and data from the contents meter of the milk tank, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check milk meter and/or contents meter milk tank".
56. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 55, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increased number of stepper motor errors, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check stepper motor".
57. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 56, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a visiting frequency reduced to zero of the milking robot, there is determined a diagnosis implying "animal obstructs entrance and/or exit and/or gate defective".
58. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 57, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish the consecutive non-identification of a number of animals, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check animal identification system".
59. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 58, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating pulsation pattern, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check liner of milk pulsation tube and/or tube shut-off valves".
60. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 59, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a discrepancy between the weight pattern of the animal to be milked during milking and the measured quantity of milk yielded, consumed feed and produced dung, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check weighing sensors".
61. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 60, characterized in that the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increased maximum milk flow, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check float in milk glass".
62. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 61, characterized in that the computer is pro-

- grammed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a decreased average milk flow and a decreased maximum milk flow, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check float in milk glass".
63. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 62, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a longer time between the generation of a vacuum in a teat cup and the start of the milk flow from the relevant quarter in combination with a shorter milking time for the relevant quarter, there is determined a diagnosis implying "insufficient sensitivity with relevant milk flow sensor".
64. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 63, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a shorter time between the generation of a vacuum in a teat cup and the start of the milk flow from the relevant quarter in combination with a longer milking time for the relevant quarter, there is determined a diagnosis implying "too high sensitivity with relevant milk flow sensor".
65. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 64, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a longer time between the generation of a vacuum in a teat cup and the start of the relevant milk flow from the left or the right quarters in combination with a shorter milking time for the relevant quarters, there is determined a diagnosis implying "leakage in teat cup liner and/or pulsation tube and/or defective pulsator".
66. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 65, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish great differences between the quarters in the time between the generation of a vacuum in a teat cup and the start of the relevant milk flow, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check milk flow sensors".
67. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 66, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increased number of unsuccessful attempts to connect the teat cups, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check laser measuring system".
68. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 67, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring

instruments establish a deviating production value (kg milk per hour), there is determined a diagnosis implying "check the milking robot".

69. A construction for automatically milking animals, said construction being provided with a milking robot and a computer, said computer being connectable with a number of measuring instruments which are related to a number of condition parameters of an animal to be milked, **characterized in that** a monitoring program for said parameters is installed in the computer, with the aid of which the computer is suitable for determining a diagnosis in relation to an anticipated undesired deviation in one or more of said parameters on the basis of a comparison of data from one or more of the measuring instruments with reference data related to said parameters.
70. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 69, **characterized in that** the computer is suitable for continuously adapting the reference data on the basis of measured quantities.
71. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 70, **characterized in that** the computer is suitable for automatically generating the reference data.
72. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 71, **characterized in that** the reference data depend on the herd of animals to be milked.
73. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 72, **characterized in that** the reference data depend on the intensity with which the construction is used.
74. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 73, **characterized in that** the construction is provided with means for transmitting the diagnosis determined by the computer by telephone and/or as SMS-message to a user and/or a service mechanic.
75. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 74, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a slowly starting milk flow profile, there is determined a diagnosis implying "prolong the pre-treatment".
76. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 75, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a combination of increased conductivity, longer dead milking time, deviating colour and volume for a particular quarter, there is determined a diagnosis implying "mastitis for said quarter".

77. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 76, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish an increased speed of emptying the feeding trough for an animal, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check animal's ration".

78. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 77, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a decreased speed of emptying the feeding trough for various animals, there is determined a diagnosis implying "feed decayed and/or not tasty".

79. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 78, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviating signal pattern with a milk flow sensor, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check relevant udder quarter".

80. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 79, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a deviation in the milk yield, the temperature, the feed consumption and the movement in the box, there is determined a diagnosis implying "attention heat".

81. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 80, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a decreased feed consumption of a particular animal, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check animal's health".

82. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 81, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a great divergence in the measurements of the weighing floor, there is determined a diagnosis implying "animal unquiet".

83. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 82, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a great divergence in the measurements of the weight of the feeding trough, there is determined a diagnosis implying "animal unquiet".

84. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 83, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a decreased speed of emptying the feeding trough for an animal, there is deter-

mined a diagnosis implying "check animal's health".

85. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 84, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a decreased visiting frequency of an animal to the milking robot, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check animal's health".

86. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 85, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a too low milk yield in comparison with the animal's ration, there is determined a diagnosis implying "ration not correct and/or check animal's activity".

87. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 86, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish a drifting of the teat positions in height, there is determined a diagnosis implying "dropsy and/or sagging udder".

88. A construction as claimed in any one of claims 70 to 87, **characterized in that** the computer is programmed such that when one or more measuring instruments establish that an animal slowly enters and/or leaves the milking robot, there is determined a diagnosis implying "check claw condition".



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 02 07 6177

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.CI.7)
D,A	EP 0 576 086 A (LELY NV C VAN DER) 29 December 1993 (1993-12-29) * claims; figures *	1,69	A01J5/017 A01J5/007
D,A	WD 99 31967 A (ERIKSSON JAN ;ALFA LAVAL AGRI AB (SE)) 1 July 1999 (1999-07-01) * claims; figures *	1,69	
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			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.CI.7)
			A01J
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 19 June 2002	Examiner Piriou, J-C
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS		1: theory or principle underlying the invention 2: earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date 11: document cited in the application 12: document cited for other reasons 13: member of the same patent family, corresponding document	
X: particularly relevant if taken alone Y: particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A: technological background O: non-written disclosure I: intermediate document			

SPC/ECH 1503 03 02 (P/02/01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 02 07 6177

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on the European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

19-06-2002

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		WO 9636212 A1	21-11-1996
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EP 02 07 6177

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Patent Application of:
Anders UMEGARD et al.

Application No.: 10/529,544

Confirmation No.: 7897

Filed: January 20, 2006

Art Unit: 3643

For: A METHOD FOR CALIBRATION OF MILK
METERS IN A MILKING SYSTEM

Examiner: K. C. Hayes

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
(SUBMISSION AFTER FILING OF AN APPLICATION BUT BEFORE FINAL
REJECTION OR NOTICE OF ALLOWANCE OR CONCURRENTLY WITH A RULE
1.114 RCE APPLICATION)

MS Amendment
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.97 and 1.98, applicant(s) hereby submit(s) an Information Disclosure Statement for consideration by the Examiner.

I. LIST OF PATENTS, PUBLICATIONS OR OTHER INFORMATION

The patents, publications, or other information submitted for consideration by the Office are listed on the PTO-SB08(s), attached hereto.

II. COPIES

- ☒ a. Copies of cited U.S. patents and patent application publications are not included.
Copies of foreign patent documents and non-patent literature are included.

☐ b. Some or all of the documents listed on the PTO-SB08 are not enclosed because they were cited in the International Search Report and copies should already be in the PTO file. If copies are needed, please contact the undersigned.

☐ c. REFERENCES PREVIOUSLY CITED OR SUBMITTED - Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.98(d), consideration of information listed on the PTO-SB08 form(s) is requested since any patents, publications, or other information which are listed on the PTO-SB08 form(s) but for which copies are not enclosed herewith, were previously cited by or submitted to the PTO in one of the following applications which has been relied upon for an earlier filing date under 35 U.S.C. § 120:

U.S. Appl. No(s) and U.S. Filing Date

III. CONCISE EXPLANATION OF THE RELEVANCE

(check at least one box)

☒ a. DOCUMENTS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE - Some or all of the patents, publications, or other information listed on the attached PTO SB08 are in the English language and therefore, do not require a statement of relevancy.

☒ b. DOCUMENTS NOT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE - A concise explanation of the relevance of all patents, publications, or other information listed that is not in the English language is as follows: An English language abstract is attached to each of EP-0416163, and JP-8110252.

☐ c. ENGLISH LANGUAGE SEARCH REPORT - An English language version of the search report or action that indicates the degree of relevance found by the foreign office is attached, thereby satisfying the requirement for a concise explanation. See MPEP 609(III)(A)(3).

☐ d. OTHER - The following additional information is provided for the Examiner's consideration.

IV. FEES (check one box)

☐ a. This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed concurrently with the filing of a new patent application; therefore, no fee is required.

☐ b. This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed concurrent with the filing of a continuation-in-part, continuation, or divisional patent application; therefore, no fee is required.

☐ c. This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed within three months of the filing date of a national application (37 C.F.R. § 1.97(b)(1)). No fee or statement is required. *(This section is not to be used with RCE's.)*

☐ d. This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed within three months of the date of entry of the national stage as set forth in § 1.491 in an international application (37 C.F.R. § 1.97(b)(2)). No fee or statement is required.

☐ e. This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed concurrently with the filing of a Request for Continued Examination under § 1.114 (37 C.F.R. § 1.97(b)(4)). No fee or statement is required.

☐ f. This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed before the mailing date of a first Action on the merits (37 C.F.R. § 1.97(b)(3)). No fee or statement is required. In the event that a first Office Action on the merits has been issued, please consider this IDS under 37 C.F.R. § 1.97(c) and see the statement under 37 C.F.R. § 1.97(e) below, or, if no statement has been made, charge our deposit account for the fee as required by 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(p).

☒ g. This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed before the mailing date of a Final Office Action under 37 C.F.R. § 1.113 (See 37 C.F.R. § 1.97(c)(1)) or before the mailing date of a Notice of Allowance under 37 C.F.R. § 1.311 (See 37 C.F.R. § 1.97(c)(2)).

☒ No statement; therefore, a fee as required by 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(p) is attached.

or

☐ See the statement below. No fee is required.

V. STATEMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.97(e)

(check only one box)

The undersigned hereby states that:

☐ a. Each item of information contained in the IDS was first cited in any communication from a foreign Patent Office in a counterpart foreign application not more than 30 days prior to the filing of this IDS; or

☐ b. Each item of information contained in the IDS was first cited in any communication from a foreign Patent Office in a counterpart foreign application not more than three months prior to the filing of this IDS; or

☐ c. No item of information contained in the IDS was cited in a communication from a foreign Patent Office in a counterpart foreign application, and, to the knowledge of the person signing the certification after making reasonable inquiry, no item of IDS was known to any individual designated in 37 C.F.R. § 1.56(c) more than three months prior to the filing of the IDS.

☐ d. Some of the items of information were cited in a communication from a foreign Patent Office. As to this information, the undersigned states that each item of information contained in the IDS was first cited in a communication from a foreign Patent Office in a counterpart foreign application not more than three months prior to the filing of this IDS. As to the remaining information, the undersigned hereby states that no item of this remaining information contained in the IDS was cited in a communication from a foreign Patent Office in a counterpart foreign application and, to the best of my knowledge after making reasonable inquiry, was known to any individual designated in 37 C.F.R. § 1.56(c) more than three months prior to the filing of this statement.

VI. PAYMENT OF FEES (check one box)

☒ The required fee is listed on the attached Fee Transmittal.

☐ No fee is required.

If the Examiner has any questions concerning this IDS, he/she is requested to contact the undersigned. If it is determined that this IDS has been filed under the wrong rule, the PTO is requested to consider this IDS under the proper rule and charge the appropriate fee to Deposit Account No. 02-2448.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: June 12, 2008

Respectfully submitted,

By _____
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Attachment(s):

- ☒ PTO/SB/08
☒ Document(s)
☐ Foreign Search Report(s)
☒ Fee
☐ Other: